

# THE MILITANT

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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## Washington escalates Syria war, looks to attack Raqqa

BY JIM BRADLEY

Washington has sent 400 troops from the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit to northern Syria to set up an artillery base as part of preparations for a planned military offensive to capture the city of Raqqa from the Islamic State.

At the same time, the Pentagon says they're sending 2,500 ground com-

**U.S. TROOPS OUT OF MIDDLE EAST, ASIA!**  
— see editorial page 8

bat paratroopers to Kuwait from the 82nd Airborne Combat Team, *Army Times* reported March 9. They will be “postured there to do all things Mosul, Raqqa, all in between,” Army Lt. Gen. Joseph Anderson told a U.S. House hearing.

These U.S. “boots on the ground” are in addition to the estimated 500 special forces that have been operating in the region for some time, training and advising the Syrian Democratic Forces, comprised of 30,000 Kurdish People’s Protection Units

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## Socialist Workers Party: ‘Defend right to abortion’

SWP in Seattle takes campaign to workers’ doorsteps



Above, Seattle Clinic Defense, inset, Militant/Edwin Fruit Mary Martin, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Seattle, joined defense of Planned Parenthood Clinic March 11 in Everett, Washington, above. Inset, Martin visited Jewish Synagogue in Seattle to offer solidarity after outside wall was defaced with anti-Jewish graffiti.

BY EDWIN FRUIT

SEATTLE — Mary Martin, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor here, joined 70 people on a picket line defending Planned Parenthood in Everett, March 11. Sponsored by the Seattle Clinic Defense, the protesters rallied in the face of a cold, steady rain and a handful of opponents of women’s rights.

Deborah, a school counselor, told Martin at the action, that women need to

be able to decide for themselves whether or when to have children. She is one of a group of local supporters of abortion rights who come to Planned Parenthood every Saturday to defend it.

“These protests are an important part

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## Debate rages over attack on political rights at Middlebury

BY MAGGIE TROWE

MIDDLEBURY, Vt. — Discussion and debate was still raging on the Middlebury College campus and among working people when members of the Socialist Workers Party visited the area March 9-10 after conservative author Charles Murray was shouted down by a large group of students, professors and middle class radicals during a public talk the week before.

The break-up of the March 2 meeting and the physical attack by a small group of thugs on Murray and professor Allison Stanger afterwards gained national and international attention. Stanger, who had moderated the meeting and challenged Murray’s views, which she strongly disagreed with, had to go to the hospital for treatment.

We came armed with the March 20 issue of the *Militant*, which has an editorial explaining how the “shut them down” strategy promoted by many

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## US-led war games in SKorea exacerbate tensions in Asia

BY JIM BRADLEY

In a move that increased tensions over the Korean Peninsula, Washington rejected a March 8 proposal by the Chinese government that the U.S. and South Korean governments suspend their joint military maneuvers in the region in exchange for an end

to North Korea’s missile and nuclear weapons program — a proposal previously put forward by Pyongyang.

There are currently 3,600 U.S. troops and 300,000 South Korean soldiers taking part in the annual “Foal Eagle” maneuvers, which include practicing the decapitation of North Korea’s leaders.

“The two sides are like two accelerating trains coming towards each other with neither side willing to give way,” Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told the media. “The ques-

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## Is the economic carnage working people face now the ‘new normal’?



Gray columns show recessions. From January 2000 to December 2016 those employed dropped 5 percentage points — equal to millions of workers — its lowest point in 30 years.

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The capitalist rulers are trying to convince working people that they’re just going to have to live with the carnage they face from capitalism’s ongoing crisis of production, trade and joblessness as the “new normal.”

This is the “End of a Golden Age,” proclaimed a Feb. 22 article by economist Marc Levinson on the Aeon website. “Unprecedented growth marked the era from 1948-1973,” he wrote. “Economists might study it forever,

Continued on page 6

## Two-party system of capitalist rule in US racked with growing instability

BY SETH GALINSKY

During his election campaign and in his first speech to Congress, President Donald Trump promised a \$1 trillion public works program to repair deteriorating infrastructure and create jobs. His repeated insistence on the reality of the carnage the capitalist economic crisis has meant for working people — in the face of claims by Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton that the economy was in swell shape — was a key reason many workers voted for him. But two months into his administration, little has been done.

Instead, Trump has issued a flurry

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DC rally: ‘Honor Native rights! Stop the pipeline!’

BY OMARI MUSA

WASHINGTON — Led by some 200 members of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, thousands joined in a protest here March 10 called by Native Nations Rise against the construction of the Dakota Access pipeline in North Dakota that will desecrate tribal burial grounds and can poison the drinking water in the area. They came from tribes across the country and Canada, and were joined by other supporters.

Participants marched from the office of the Army Corps of Engineers, which has approved completion of the pipeline, to a rally at Lafayette Park across from the White House.

“Two years ago I had to explain where Standing Rock was,” Guy Jones, a Standing Rock Sioux who now lives in Dayton, Ohio, told the *Washington Post*. “Now the whole world knows where Standing Rock is.”

The battle to stop the pipeline began in 2014 and drew international attention last year when thousands came to support the Standing Rock Sioux, Cheyenne River Sioux, and other tribes fighting to defend their sovereignty. Energy Transfer Partners, builder of the pipeline, is tunneling under the reservoir that provides their water. The protests at the site ended last month.

President Donald Trump issued an executive order in January allowing the company to finish the last sections of the pipeline. The Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Sioux have filed a lawsuit seeking to halt the project, with a decision expected this month.

“We are not defeated,” Dave

Archambault II, president of the Standing Rock Sioux, told the crowd. “And we are not victims.”

The feeling of solidarity and continued determination to fight among native people across the country and beyond inspired Ahjani Yepa and several others from Jemez Pueblo, New Mexico, to attend. “We were at Standing Rock and saw the unity of our peoples against the government and that corporation,” she told the *Militant*. “I hadn’t imagined there would be such unity between different groups of my people.”

“We have to stand up for Indian rights,” Lawrence Mann, a Potawatomi who came from Wisconsin, told the *Militant*. “We had to fight to close down a zinc and iron mine because it



Reuters/Kevin Lamarque

Standing Rock Sioux tribe members, thousands of other Native Americans and supporters march in Washington March 10 against U.S. rulers’ threat to their sovereignty, water rights.

spoiled our water. It took 10 years but we did it.”

Elena Enriquez, 25, from Bowling Green, Ohio, spent last October at

Standing Rock. “I came to the conclusion that the political, social and economic system is in the interests of the big corporations,” she said.

Tensions rise in Asia amid US-SKorea war games

Continued from front page

tion is, are the two sides really ready for a head-on collision? Given the situation, our priority now is to flash the red light and apply brakes on both trains.”

Nikki Haley, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, responded that talks with Pyongyang were out of the question because North Korean President Kim Jong Un is not a “rational” person. “We’re not ruling anything out,” she said, threatening North Korea, “and we’re considering every option that’s on the table.”

Seoul and Tokyo, following Washington’s lead, also dismissed Beijing’s proposal. The Japanese government is on a

drive to upgrade the fighting capacity of its military, raising its military budget in 2017 for the fifth year in a row. The \$44 billion expenditure, the highest since World War II, is justified as “tensions increase with China over disputed islands in the East China Sea and North Korea’s missile tests get ever closer to the island nation’s coasts,” reported UPI.

Underneath the spreading tensions in the Far East is competition between the expanding economic reach of Beijing and the declining power of Washington, which still remains the dominant imperialist power worldwide.

Particularly sharp is rivalry over trade lanes in the South China Sea — routes that carry \$5 trillion in sea-borne trade each year. All of the capitalist regimes in the region — from Japan to Vietnam and the Philippines — are vying for a place at the table.

In response to the U.S.-South Korea maneuvers, Pyongyang on March 6 launched four missiles that they claimed had the capacity to hit seven U.S. military bases in Japan where 54,000 soldiers are stationed. The missiles landed 200 miles off the Japanese coast.

The same day Washington began in-

stalling a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, anti-ballistic missile system at a U.S. Army base 45 miles south of Seoul. Beijing demanded the installation be halted, saying its range endangered the sovereignty of China.

In retaliation, Beijing, Seoul’s main trading partner, shut down a chain of South Korean-owned stores and threatened further steps.

The instability in the region was deepened when South Korea’s Constitutional Court unanimously upheld the legislature’s impeachment of President Park Geun-hye in a corruption scandal and removed her from office.

Hundreds of thousands of South Koreans had protested week after week for her ouster. A top official of Samsung, the country’s largest corporate empire, has been indicted in the scandal.

Moon Jae-in, a leader of the opposition Democratic Party, leads in polls on who will be elected president. He opposes the deployment of the THAAD system, saying it “has dragged the country into the dangerous and growing rivalry between Washington and Beijing,” according to the *New York Times* March 9.

THE MILITANT

Oppose Washington’s colonial rule in Puerto Rico

Acting under Washington’s colonial dictates, the Puerto Rican government is slashing jobs, wages, pensions and raising tuition fees to pay debt to bondholders. The ‘Militant’ covers resistance by Puerto Rican workers, farmers and youth to these attacks.



University of Puerto Rico students protest government education cuts, tuition rise.

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# ‘Defend right to abortion’

Continued from front page

of defending women’s rights,” Martin said. “We need to mount a systematic fight state-by-state against the restrictions that states are imposing on our right to abortion, including waiting periods, parental consent, mandatory sonograms and so forth.

“The Roe v. Wade decision, which legalized abortion, creates problems for women because it makes our rights dependent on medical developments and doctors, not our basic rights as human beings,” Martin said. “We need to fight for our right to abortion to be based on the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which says we deserve equal protection under the law, the same as men.”

After the picket, Martin joined another campaign supporter to knock on workers’ doors in Seattle’s Central District. They met Alec McGinnis, a laid off information technology worker, who said he recently went to Oaxaca and Chiapas in Mexico to learn about the struggles of indigenous people there. “How’s the campaign going?” he asked Martin.

“We find people want to talk about what is happening to the working class today and what we can do about it. People like you,” she said. “I don’t think of myself as an activist,” he said, “but I want to learn about the social struggles that are taking place.”

He picked up a subscription to the *Militant* and a copy of *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record: Why Washington Fears Working People*, a book by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes. He said he was interested in that one because he didn’t agree with people he knew who say everything coming down on workers is because of Donald Trump and the Republicans.

“There are three parties and two classes in this country,” Martin said. “The capitalist families have their Democrats and Republicans and the Socialist Workers Party is the workers’ party.”

Martin and other party members joined a street corner picket in the Columbia City neighborhood of Seattle near the SWP headquarters the next day. It was sponsored by people in the area to show their opposition to racism and anti-immigrant prejudice. Signs included “Everyone is welcome here” and “Jews Against Islamopho-

bia.” Participants included Jews, Muslims from Somalia and Gambia, and African-Americans. Martin carried a sign calling for “Amnesty for All Immigrants Living in the U.S.” A group of Somali women took several copies of SWP campaign literature to give to friends.

On March 11, Martin took a message of solidarity to the Temple De Hirsch Sinai synagogue in the Capitol Hill neighborhood of Seattle after anti-Semitic graffiti was found on the wall saying, “HOLOCAUST IS FAKE HISTORY.”

Over the last couple weeks, Martin has joined actions opposing a bomb threat against the Stroum Jewish Community Center in Mercer Island, vandalism against a Muslim mosque in Redmond and against attacks on South Asians in Bellevue and Kent.

Martin and other party members have met a number of workers interested in learning more about the SWP and joining in political activity.

Martin is taking part in a class with Pat Scott, a Walmart worker, on the Pathfinder book *It’s the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US ‘Justice’ System*, where revolutionaries known as the Cuban Five describe their experiences locked up well over a decade in U.S. prisons for actions they took to defend the Cuban Revolution.

Scott kicked off this week’s class, saying, “I can sum this up — under capitalism there is no justice for working people.”

## Communist League protests attacks on Muslims

BY BEVERLY BERNARDO

MONTREAL — On March 1 a group calling itself the Council of Conservative Citizens of Canada or C4 sent a bomb threat targeting Muslims at Concordia University to local media outlets. The threat to set off daily bombs from March 1- 3 came as the Muslim Students Association was holding “Islam Awareness Week” on the campus. The university administration evacuated three buildings at the school’s downtown campus.

A similar note was sent to nearby McGill University’s radio station CKUT, threatening future actions against Muslims there.

These threats come after the murder of six Muslims on Jan. 29 at the Islamic Cultural Centre in Quebec City and vandalism against two mosques in Montreal — the Khadijah Centre and the Mosque Tawuba — in February.

Philippe Tessier, Communist League candidate for mayor of Montreal, sent a message to the Muslim Students Association condemning the bomb threat and demanding that its perpetrators be “arrested, prosecuted, and jailed.” He called on “all working people and our unions to speak out against scapegoating and victimizations of Muslims and Jews.”

On Feb. 27, a bomb threat had forced the closure of the Calgary Jewish Community Centre.

The next day MSA members welcomed people to their Awareness Week information tables set up in a busy campus pavilion. They offered samosas, donuts, and cotton candy to those who came to discuss with them.

“We planned this event to continue through today, and, with the support of

## NY rally backs immigrants’ right to driver’s license



Militant/Ellen Brickley

ALBANY, N.Y. — Hundreds of immigrants and supporters rallied at the New York state Capitol March 7 demanding the state issue special driver’s licenses without requiring proof of immigration status.

Participants included dairy, apple and vegetable farmworkers, cleaners and restaurant workers from around the state. Many carried placards for the Green Light NY: Driving Together! campaign organized by the Workers’ Center of Central New York in Syracuse. Make the Road from New York City sent a contingent, as did the Socialist Workers Party.

“We need to drive to work, on the job and to get around to do what we need to do,” Guillermo Chávez, an apple farmworker, told the *Militant* at the rally.

Among rally speakers were Luis Jimenez, a dairy farmworker from Rochester, and Democratic Party Assemblyman Francisco Moya from Queens. Moya, and Phil Ramos, Democratic Party Assemblyman from Long Island, have introduced a driver’s license bill in the state Assembly.

After a similar campaign by immigrant workers and their allies, authorities in neighboring Vermont began issuing a Driving Privilege Card in 2014 that workers without government-required immigration papers may obtain. Immigrants can now get licenses like this in 12 states and Washington, D.C.

—MAGGIE TROWE

the university, we decided we would not be intimidated. That’s why we’re here today, despite the threats,” Rim Hamila, an MSA vice president, told the *Militant*.

“We wanted to show we have nothing to hide,” said Ibrahim, another MSA member. “Many students and professors have come by to tell us they are happy we are holding this event.”

Tessier came to express his solidarity and join the discussion.

“I think everyone has a right to their religious beliefs; we are all human beings,” Ahmed Joma told Tessier. “I think the majority oppose these attacks perpetrated by sick individuals.”

ings,” Ahmed Joma told Tessier. “I think the majority oppose these attacks perpetrated by sick individuals.”

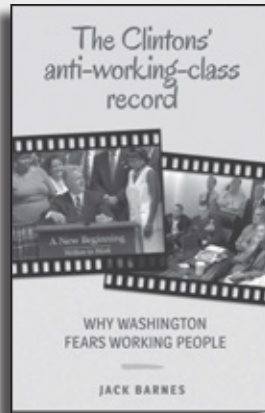
“I think the problem is deeper,” Tessier said. “The bosses and their government seek to divide working people and turn us against each other. That’s why the mobilizations taking place today in the United States against the deportation of immigrants are so important.

“Your event today is part of that fight back,” he said.

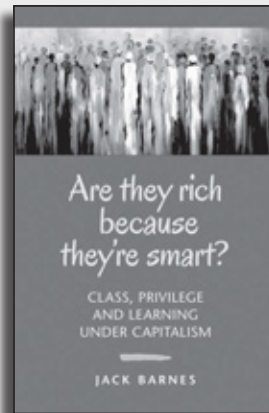
## For the first time in decades, the US rulers have begun to fear the working class

Books for the deepening debate among workers seeking a way forward in face of capitalism’s global economic crisis, social calamity and spreading wars.

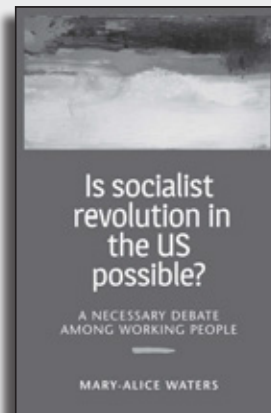
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# Fight over SWP disclosure exemption heats up in DC

BY SETH GALINSKY

For the second time in a month, the Federal Election Commission postponed its March 2 hearing on the Socialist Workers Party's request to extend its exemption from disclosing names of contributors to its election campaigns. The delay was accompanied by the release of two new draft "advisory opinions." One attempts to clean up the commission's first draft, while asserting more forcefully the determination to deny the party's request for extension. The second new draft "C" concurs with the party's request and proposes to extend its exemption through the end of the presidential election in 2020. The commission vote is now set for March 23.

Since 1974, the Socialist Workers Party has won and maintained the right to receive campaign contributions without disclosing contributors' names. This is an important gain for the working class, defending workers' right to engage

in political activity independent of the bosses and their parties, while curbing the threat of government harassment.

The FEC's initial draft called for ending the exemption. In a sharp criticism Feb. 16, the party's lawyers — Michael Krinsky and Lindsey Frank — explained that in doing so the commission would "rest upon an unprecedented, dangerous standard" that would make it impossible for anyone to ever win exemption.

"Regardless of whatever the commission decides," John Studer, national SWP campaign director, told a March 10 Militant Labor Forum in New York, "we won't change what we do politically, including running candidates, and doing so within the law in a way that maximizes protection for our contributors and supporters."



AP Photo/The Daily News, Bill Wagner

From victory of 1917 Bolshevik Revolution to today, U.S. rulers have targeted working-class militants and communists. Above, 2011 police assault on protesting longshore workers in Longview, Washington. Solidarity actions with longshoremen Socialist Workers Party participated in were targets of government spying. Since its founding, Socialist Workers Party has been blood and bone of working-class struggles. As polarization deepens, there are growing attacks on political rights of the working class.

The latest draft recounts the "long history of threats, harassment and reprisals against the SWP and its supporters by government agencies and private parties." In fact, in the course

of a 15-year-long lawsuit the party won in 1986 against the FBI and other spy agencies, it was disclosed that the FBI had gathered over 8 million documents on the SWP, wiretapped its supporters and carried out at least 204 burglaries at party offices.

The party has shown that over the last several years the government has spied on "other domestic activist groups whose areas of advocacy overlap substantially with the SWP's," draft "C" states. Also the party has introduced evidence documenting its members and supporters continue to face harassment and threats from government agencies and rightist thugs.

The draft calls for extending the party's exemption, concluding there is a "reasonable probability" that SWP supporters could "face threats, harassment or reprisals" if their names were disclosed.

"Another strong reason for the SWP's exemption is the sharp polarization taking place in politics in the U.S. today, and related attacks on democratic and political rights," Studer told those at the forum.

"The Donald Trump administration's moves to set religious and political tests for the right to political asylum, increased public attention to the operations of U.S. intelligence agencies, assaults against freedom of speech and debate at campuses from Middlebury to Berkeley," he said, "all of these can make people concerned that public association with the SWP can lead to harassment."

"Since its founding, the party — and its communist forebears dating back to the Russian Revolution — has been a target of the bosses, their political and immigration police, and rightist thugs," Studer said. "That's because from its founding the SWP has been blood and bones of the class struggle in the U.S. That's what explains why we're the ones who are leading this fight."

"Alyson Kennedy, the SWP's 2016 presidential candidate, will join me and our lawyers at the March 23 hearing," Studer said. "We don't know what the outcome will be, but we know we have their attention."

## Chicago fundraiser builds May Day Brigade to Cuba

BY NAOMI CRAINE

CHICAGO — "Cuba has inspired revolutions around the world, and I hope we can do that here," said Kofi Ademola, explaining why he's participating in the 12th annual May Day International Brigade to Cuba to learn more about it. "Reading Che Guevara gave me context to see what the world could look like." Ademola was part of the program at a March 11 potluck fundraiser for the delegation, which drew more than 50 people.

Steve Eckardt from the Chicago Cuba Coalition, who is national coordinator for the brigade, chaired the event. He noted this will be the first time there will be a U.S. contingent in the international brigade, encouraging others to sign up before the March 30 deadline.

The April 24 to May 8 brigade involves a week of meetings and discussions with militants in Cuban mass organizations in the countryside, presentations on Cuba's revolution, economy and relations with Washington, and work in the fields for four hours a day.

Then brigadistas will join the annual mass May Day mobilization in Havana, followed by participating in an International Meeting in Solidarity with Cuba.

Visiting Cuba as a teenager in the 1990s "helped me understand the world outside my small corner," said

Aislinn Pulley, a leader of Black Lives Matter in Chicago who is taking part in the brigade along with other members of the group. "It helped me understand more what capitalism is and isn't, and what socialism strives to be." She described her experiences participating in volunteer agricultural work during that trip.

"The two main demands of the Cuban people are to end the blockade" and end the U.S. occupation of the Guantánamo naval base, said Howard Ehrman, a retired University of Illinois Chicago professor. He gave examples of the impact of the strangling economic sanctions that Washington maintains to this day as part of its decadeslong efforts to overthrow the socialist revolution in Cuba.

Ehrman introduced "Guantánamo is Ours," a documentary film about the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, imposed by Washington on the Cuban people in 1903. Today the U.S. government has turned the base into a notorious prison for indefinite detention of those it chooses to label as terrorists.

After the international solidarity conference in Havana, participants in the brigade have the option to join a May 4-6 "Fifth Seminar for Peace and for the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases" in the city of Guantánamo. The semi-

nar will discuss ways to step up efforts worldwide to demand Washington get out of Guantánamo.

Other brigade members will travel to Villa Clara and Cienfuegos, for visits to area health centers and art schools, and for meetings with leaders of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution.

The brigade is dedicated to Fidel Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara. Castro, the central leader of the revolution, died last November. This is the 50th anniversary of the death of Guevara, who was murdered by Bolivian government troops and CIA agents while leading a guerrilla column against the dictatorship there.

Many brigade participants will be visiting Cuba for the first time. "I've always been attracted to Cuban culture and the revolution," Sally Cattouse, a graphic artist, told the *Militant*. "I'm interested in socialism as well, so this is the perfect group to go with."

She picked up a copy of *Soldier of the Cuban Revolution* by Luis Alfonso Zayas, one of some two dozen titles on the Cuban Revolution by Pathfinder Press, to learn more about the revolution. Zayas joined the revolutionary struggle to bring down the U.S.-backed dictatorship in Cuba as a teenager and today is a general in Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces.

"I was born in Pakistan," said Shiffa Rizki. "With a Third World country you think of poverty, illiteracy, lack of health care — and Pakistan is like that. You see children in the street with no food or shelter. Cuba is a Third World country but it's different."

"And Cuba is independent from capitalist domination. I want to see what that's like," she said. Rizki plans to read Pathfinder's *The First and Second Declarations of Havana*, manifestos of the Cuban Revolution delivered by Castro to millions of Cubans in Revolution Square.

The potluck raised more than \$700 to help defray costs for participants. And it helped lay the basis for organizing more activities in defense of the Cuban Revolution, against Washington's embargo and its continuing occupation of Guantánamo.

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# Union blames Ukraine gov't in mine explosion that kills 8

BY ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

On March 2, eight coal miners from the Lviv region in western Ukraine were killed at the state-owned underground Stepova mine. Another 21 were hospitalized with serious injuries and burns, including six who are in critical condition. Of the 34 miners working where the blast occurred, many were trapped 1,800 feet below ground for several hours.

According to Mykhailo Volynets, chair of the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine, the explosion was caused by an accumulation of methane gas and unsafe cables the bosses used that failed to meet accepted standards. “This created sparks and high levels of methane — a bomb.”

In the aftermath of the explosion, Ukrainian Prime Minister Volodymyr

Groysman admitted government funding for rescue equipment investment is only 15 to 20 percent of what is needed.

The Independent Trade Union was forged in 1989-91 in a wave of massive strikes and protests by miners and other workers for higher pay and safer conditions, combined with political demands, including an end to domination by Moscow. These actions helped lead to the collapse of the Soviet Union and for an independent Ukraine.

Last November, 50 coal miners at the state-owned No. 10 Novovolynska mine, near the Polish border, carried out a hunger strike demanding three months’ back pay and greater investment of state funds.

Four city trolley car workers went on a hunger strike in Kiev Feb. 6 to protest harassment and firings of union



Trolley bus depot workers on hunger strike Feb. 3 in Kiev. Miners, transit workers and teachers in Ukraine have protested against unpaid wages and union busting in recent weeks.

activists there — members of the Free Trade Union of Railway Workers — and against unsafe work conditions. “Just imagine: the drivers are forced to drive

with old, ‘bald’ tires,” Volynets, who stayed with the strikers, told the press. “It is terrible to think what might happen when there’s snow and ice on the road.”

## Two-party system of capitalist rule is racked with growing instability

Continued from front page

of executive orders, including many that foster dangerous divisions among working people. They include a moratorium on visas for residents of six mostly Muslim nations, threats to step up the pace of deportations, and instructions to government agencies to reduce red-tape and environmental regulations. He has pledged billions to the Pentagon for new weaponry and to press more workers into the military. And he’s moving to bury Obamacare — no great shakes for working people — but hasn’t offered anything to replace it.

For all of his demagoguery and all the anti-Trump hysteria from liberals and the middle-class left, much of what his administration has been doing is an extension of what previous administrations set in motion. The anti-working-class deportations are following patterns set by the Barack Obama administration. U.S. wars continue in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

The slow-burning capitalist economic depression grinding down on working people has had political reflection in an unprecedented blow to the stability of the capitalist two-party system in the U.S.

Politicians from the crisis-ridden Democratic Party, including Bernie Sanders, have no alternate program. Instead, they concentrate on obstructing Trump. They headline charges that his administration is in cahoots with Moscow. When pressed for evidence, many point to the FBI, as if that was where workers should look for the truth!

A headline in the *New York Times* captured the spirit, calling the Democrats “The New Party of No.” They’re in shambles, and the party’s left wing is determined to take over.

In an interview with the London *Guardian* printed March 10, Sanders outlined his plans to salvage the Democratic Party by seizing control and refurbishing its image as a “pro-worker” party.

Sanders complains that Trump is trying “to undermine American democracy in the sense of making wild attacks against the media, that virtually everything that the mainstream media says is a lie.” He says that, unlike normal Republicans like George W. Bush, Trump operates “outside of mainstream

American political values” and “is a pathological liar.”

The “liberal elite” that has had control of the Democratic Party — Sanders names the Clintons and Barack Obama as examples — paved the way for Trump, he said, because they “moved very far away from the needs of the middle class and working families of this country.”

“My job,” Sanders said, is to get “more and more people to run for office, to participate.”

This defense of “American democracy,” the “mainstream media” and the “intelligence community” is revealing. The bourgeois media is a key part of obscuring that what exists in the United States is the dictatorship of capital. No matter who is president, no matter which of the two capitalist parties holds a majority in Congress, the decisions they make serve the interests of the propertied rulers.

Millions were unhappy that their choice was Trump or Clinton. Those who chose Trump saw a “lesser evil” who recognized the disaster they’re living in and seemed to offer a way out.

More and more workers are beginning to see that neither party defends their interests.

“The two party system will never defend the interests of the workers,” said Osborne Hart, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of New York, who is in Canada extending solidarity to steelworkers on strike at the CEZ refinery in Salaberry de Valleyfield, Quebec. “They are both parties of the capitalist class.”

**Join May Day protests**

“The Socialist Workers Party is opposed to the ban on refugees and visitors from the six majority-Muslim nations. Government requirements for political or religious tests for people to come to the U.S. are an attack on the rights of all workers,” Hart said. “We call on workers and our unions to join the upcoming nationwide protests being called for May Day and to demand amnesty for the 11 million undocumented workers living in the U.S. today.

“The only way we can unite the working class is by opposing the attempts by the bosses to divide us with their depor-

tations, immigration sweeps and efforts to pit workers with jobs against those who can’t get one,” he said.

Trump claimed credit when the Labor Department announced official unemployment had dropped to 4.7 percent in February. “Not a bad way to start day 50 of the administration,” Trump’s press secretary Sean Spicer said.

During the election campaign Trump won interest from working people when he said the official unemployment rate was “phony” because the government manipulates the figures. When asked why the latest figures can be trusted, Spicer said the president told him to say, “They may have been phony in the past, but it’s very real now.”

That will be a hard sell to working people no matter who they voted for. They are living the reality — miners who have seen jobs dry up in Kentucky and West Virginia, the almost one in five workers who are stuck on part-time because they can’t get full-time jobs, the more than 1.7 million workers who wanted to work but have given up looking and are not included in official unemployment figures, and more.

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



**March 27, 1992**

The FBI carried out violent attacks in Puerto Rico in 1978 that were blamed on pro-independence groups, an undercover cop admitted in testimony at Puerto Rican Senate hearings.

This was part of a campaign by the federal and colonial governments throughout the 1970s to victimize and smear the independence movement, student activists, and unions in Puerto Rico.

The Senate hearings are investigating the 1978 ambush and murder of two independence activists. The police, FBI, and governor initially claimed the two youths were terrorists caught trying to blow up communication towers at Cerro Maravilla. It was later proven that the police had organized the entire operation, in which an undercover cop entrapped the youths.



**March 27, 1967**

Speedup and long hours in the current production boom, stimulated by the Vietnam war, have brought the 1966 rate of industrial accidents to the highest point since the early 1950s, during the Korean war. The National Safety Council estimates that last year’s factory mishaps took 14,600 lives. More production time was lost from accidents than from all other work stoppages, including strikes.

A prime cause is inexperience, that is, putting workers on dangerous jobs without sufficient training and then pushing them to produce at top speed. Dangers are also increased, for new and seasoned hands alike, by company neglect of safety precautions.

Many accidents are due to workers being tired from toiling overtime or from moonlighting on other jobs to make ends meet.



**March 28, 1942**

Washington is supposed to be the “headquarters of the democracies.” If you want to know what they mean by democracy in Washington you ought to read the judgment handed down by District Court Justice McDonoghue early this month.

It seems that a colored woman was living in a part of the city where Negroes are not wanted. It also seems that they have some kind of law against this in the nation’s capital. The judged handed down a ruling ordering her to move in 60 days because she is a Negro. He also issued a permanent injunction against the owners of the building to prevent them from selling or leasing the property to Negroes in the future.

In Washington, you see, they don’t need a Ku Klux Klan to segregate the Negroes in housing — the government does it for them!



# Debate rages at Middlebury

Continued from front page

liberal and leftist students and faculty is a deadly threat to the working class.

The pages of the *Middlebury Campus* weekly paper were full of articles debating the attack on Murray, who works for the American Enterprise Institute and is co-author of *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*.

Murray was invited to speak by the Middlebury College American Enterprise Institute Club. Student organizations—including College Democrats, Resistance and Wonderbread: White Students for Racial Justice—labeled Murray a “white supremacist” and demanded the event be canceled.

Hundreds of alumni signed a letter printed before Murray arrived, marked by the hysteria about the Donald Trump administration and the anti-working-class view that racism and opposition to women’s rights are on the rise among working people. It said *The Bell Curve* presents “the same thinking that motivates eugenics and the genocidal white supremacist ideologies which are enjoying a popular resurgence under the new presidential administration.”

When the college administration declined to cancel the meeting, some students and faculty organized to stop it.

Students shouted, “Your message is hatred; we cannot tolerate it!” Another chant was, “Racist, sexist, anti-gay, Charles Murray, go away,” which ignored the libertarian’s well-known support for legalization of abortion and same-sex marriage.

In *The Bell Curve* Murray posits that the rich are rich, and deserve to be, because of their high intelligence, in contrast with low-paid, low-IQ workers. “What’s at issue in *The Bell Curve* is an attempt to defend the wealth and class privilege of a so-called meritocratic social layer—the ‘cognitive elite’ is the euphemism chosen by the authors,” Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes writes in *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart? Class, Privilege, and Learning Under Capitalism*. “It’s even more about social class than race.”

College officials moved Murray to a studio to broadcast a live-streamed video of the discussion between him and moderator Stanger. Protesters tried to break this up too. Some wearing face-masks held a banner that read, “Choke on your silver spoon, you f---king Nazi.” These were some of those who attacked Murray and Stanger as they left the building.

We talked with students outside the student union and were invited to come inside and continue the discussion over lunch. Our table attracted a number of students with a variety of views. One was wearing a homemade button saying, “Free expression.” He said a number of his friends had asked him to make copies for them.

“I oppose Murray’s politics,” Alyson Kennedy, who ran as the Socialist Workers Party candidate for president in 2016, told Andrew Hennings, showing him the book by Barnes. “This is not an abstract discussion of ‘rights,’” Kennedy said. “It’s a life-and-death question for the working class and its allies, who need the political space to discuss and debate how to build a revolutionary movement capable of taking political

power. Shouting down speakers we disagree with, not to mention physically attacking them, closes that space down.

“We lose the opportunity to confront and debate reactionary ideas that are a danger to working people,” she said. “And it introduces censorship over politics that can lead to attacks among us by those who say someone else’s ideas are wrong.”

Working people whose doors we knocked on in town were alarmed by the attack on the meeting. One woman, a group home attendant, said she felt strongly that different opinions should be heard out and debated.

“It was horrible what those students did,” two cashiers at the college bookstore told us. Most students we met said they opposed the physical attack, but many argued that the actions were understandable, saying Murray’s ideas are dangerous and must be suppressed.

“I’ve heard, ‘everyone has a right to their freedom of speech,’” wrote Juan Andrade-Vera in the *Campus*. “With that, I disagree. Allowing everyone to speak freely, especially on matters of race, creates that power imbalance my peers agreed existed, thus, not providing marginalized groups equal paths to success.”

An op-ed signed by several dozen students studying abroad backed breaking up Murray’s meeting, and charged

## Is economic carnage facing workers the ‘new normal’?

Continued from front page  
but it can never be repeated.”

In that quarter century living standards of working people improved in the imperialist countries of Western Europe, North America and Japan, he says. But this is the case no longer. With real wages for production workers stagnant for decades, nearly half of 30- and 40-year-olds now earn less than their parents did.

Through struggles waged by workers in the aftermath of World War II, union membership reached its highest levels. In the U.S. workers won social benefits, including pensions, some health coverage and government-funded unemployment pay. All these are under attack as the bosses push to drive down workers’ living and working conditions and to break their unions. In the U.S. the number of unionized workers is down to 10.7 percent overall, and just 6.4 percent in industry and the rest of the private sector—its lowest level for a century.

The slow-burning depression conditions and growing boss attacks we face are rooted in a historic worldwide economic crisis of falling capitalist production and trade.

Because of declining profit rates, the capitalists have held back from investing in capacity-expanding plant and production, as they did in Levinson’s so-called golden age. Instead, they’ve turned to speculation on stocks, bonds, derivatives and other forms of commercial paper in search of higher returns, or are content to sit on their cash.

The average profit rate in U.S. industry reached its modern high point in 1950, built on Washington’s victory in the second imperialist world war and the rulers’ resulting preeminent position in world trade and production.



Todd Balfour

Socialist Workers Party members went to Middlebury College to join debate on importance of political rights after students, others shouted down *Bell Curve* author Charles Murray March 2.

that criticisms “have de-legitimized this expression of student will, clinging to flimsy free speech arguments.” They demanded the administration “recognize attacks on POC humanity” and “demonstrate a tangible commitment to this college’s marginalized communities.” POC stands for people of color.

Others we talked to disagreed. “Some students say speakers like him should be shut down,” Nathalia González, 21, a psychology student who grew up in the working-class Pilsen area of Chicago, said. “Others say that attending his talk

or protesting it just gives him legitimacy. I think different points of view should be heard.”

“I am not convinced by arguments for shutting down this event,” wrote political science professor Erik Bleich in the *Campus*. “It is all the less persuasive amid assertions that students were just exercising their free speech rights of ‘simultaneous dialogue’ when they impeded Murray from delivering his lecture. This is a fundamental and troubling misconception of free speech.”

Even when the boom peaked and profit rates began to stagnate, the owners of industrial capital continued to reap substantial growth in their overall mass of profits for the next couple of decades. They invested in new factories, replaced worn-out equipment, and expanded into new branches of industry.

### Accelerating economic crisis

The 1974-75 worldwide recession signaled an end to those years of capitalist expansion. Attacks on the rights, wages and living standard of working people became the norm.

“From work to income to health to social mobility,” economist Nicholas Eberstadt wrote in *Commentary* Feb. 15, workers began to face what he calls “a distressing era for the United States.”

This crisis has been accelerating despite claims to the contrary by the boss media and the meritocracy—the upper-middle-class layer based in academia, foundations, nonprofits, think tanks and staffing government regulatory agencies—who administer society for the capitalist rulers. Eberstadt describes them as living in “the bubble.”

These “smarts” argue that February’s official unemployment rate of 4.7 percent shows the economy is at “near full employment.” Maybe that’s true for them, their kin and in their cloistered neighborhoods, but for us life is different.

From January 2000 to December 2016, the jobs-to-population ratio for workers 20 years and older has dropped almost 5 percentage points—from 64.6 to 59.7. “If our nation’s work rate today were back up to its start-of-the-century highs,” writes Eberstadt, “well over 10 million more Americans would currently have paying jobs.” And, as Levinson put it,

these figures will never get back to his “golden age.”

Millions of workers who’ve managed to hold jobs today only get part-time or contract work. For every unemployed male worker between 25 and 55 years of age, “there are another three who are neither working nor looking for work,” said Eberstadt. That’s 5 million people.

For women, whose battles for equal rights led to job gains that reached their highest percentage in the workforce in 2000, this figure has declined back to where it was in the 1980s. Simply put, the bosses and the crisis of their capitalist system have shrunk the working class.

Companies are increasingly relying on employing large numbers of workers from temp agencies and contractors, at lower pay, few if any benefits, and without union protection on the job.

The *Wall Street Journal* ran a feature in February titled “The End of Employees,” reporting that bigger companies now outsource up to 50 percent of their jobs. The results? “The strategy prunes costs for firms and job security for millions of workers,” the paper said.

In this “new normal,” working people face deteriorating health care, an epidemic of drug addiction and, for the first time in decades, a drop in life expectancy.

Socialist Workers Party members across the country are talking about the crisis to workers on their doorsteps, at strike picket lines and protests against government attacks. They find anger over this class reality, a wide discussion among working people on a way forward to end capitalist rule, and growing interest in the party.



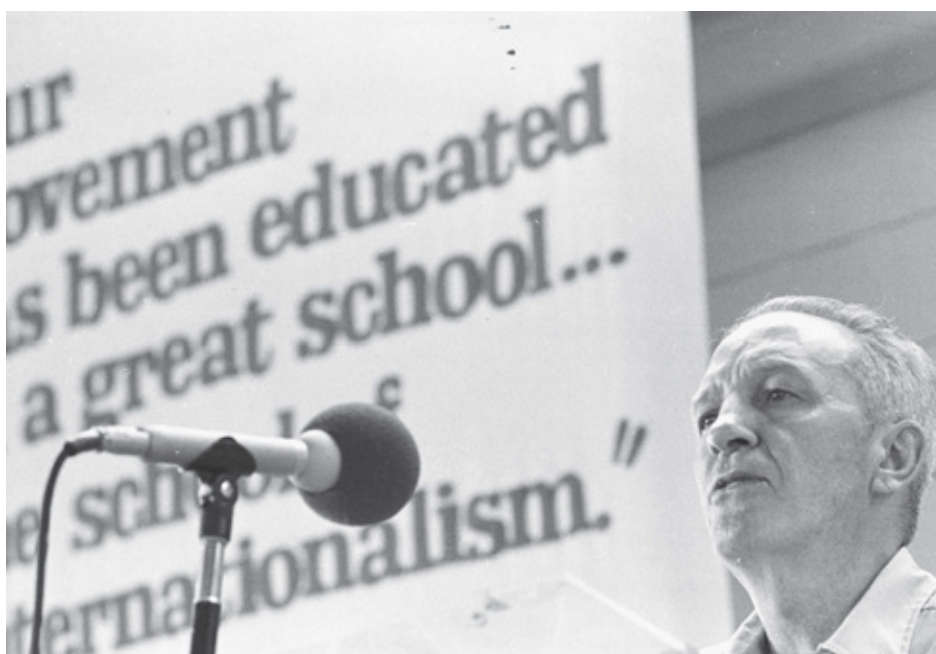
# Suppression of rights inevitably targets the working class

Below are excerpts from *Counter-Mobilization: A Strategy to Fight Racist and Fascist Attacks*. It contains the transcript of a 1975 discussion led by Farrell Dobbs. Dobbs was a leader of the 1930s Teamster strikes; central organizer of the first Teamster campaign to unionize over-the-road truck drivers; and national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party from 1953 to 1972. Other participants excerpted here are Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, and Steve Clark, at the time the national secretary of the Young Socialist Alliance. Copyright © 1976 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

## EDUCATION FOR SOCIALISTS

FARRELL DOBBS: Starting from our initial premise — the aim of the capitalists with regard to fascism — I'm trying to look at each tactic from the point of view of its *effect*. What happens if you start out with the premise that you're going to organize a battle to prevent the fascists from saying one word in public? What happens, on the other hand, if you operate on the basis of asserting and exercising the right to counterdemonstrate, to confront the fascists in this form without getting bogged down in the question of the fascists' right of free speech? The first approach is to the advantage of the ruling class. The second approach puts you in a more favorable position and the ruling class in a more difficult position for carrying out its basic aim of crippling the rights of the antifascists.

To use a slight reformulation of that phrase of Malcolm X, the essence of the ruling class tactic toward oppositional movements like the strug-



Farrell Dobbs speaking at 1973 SWP national convention. Dobbs led the 1975 discussion in the party's political committee on working-class tactics and strategy in the struggle against racism and fascism, sparked by an incident at San Francisco State University.

gle against fascism is to make the criminal appear to be the victim and the victim appear to be the criminal. They try that in every struggle, without exception. You always have to keep that in mind when you deal with the tactical nuances in the struggle.

Remember that tactics have to serve a strategic course, and the strategic course has to be closely attuned to the programmatic aims. It's not advantageous to grab hold of a tactic because it seems appealing at the moment without always seeing the tactic in relation to the whole fundamental problem. ...

STEVE CLARK: The concrete incident that led Ginny Hildebrand and I to want this discussion occurred at San Francisco State University. A professor invited a Nazi onto the campus to address his speech class on March 10, 1975. No right-wing student or faculty group was involved. In fact, the professor was known to have left-liberal leanings. The way he conducted his class was to bring in all kinds of professional speakers — preachers, Communists, and in this case a Nazi.

A demonstration was called with the stated aim of running this Nazi off campus and preventing his appearance before the class. It was called by the Spartacus Youth League, which describes itself as the youth section of the Spartacist League. The Progressive Labor Party and the Revolution-

ary Student Brigade were involved in one way or another on the same basic line. The real organizations with influence on campus — the Chicano student organization, the Black students organization, the women's organization, and some others that were approached — didn't want anything to do with the action.

The Young Socialist Alliance [YSA] refused to support or endorse this demonstration because of the way it was projected. We were aware of some of the basic ideas that Farrell laid out. We had learned the dangers of the confrontationist approach in the antiwar movement. ...

We took a different tack than that proposed by Farrell on the question of the rights of Jensen, Shockley, the other academic racists, and, by implication, the fascists. We incorporated a lot of the lessons Farrell discussed. We opposed calling on the administration or the government to ban speakers. We thought we were avoiding the trap of placing the axis on freedom of speech, by avoiding actions like shouting the speakers down and other things which have led to unnecessary victimization of antiracists. But we said that the YSA does not believe racists and Nazis have the right to speak on campus. ...

JACK BARNES: The processes going on in society, including class polarization, reflect themselves on campus.

Let's begin with that reality, and then we can fit all our strategy and tactics on campus into the broader strategy and tactics of the class struggle.

That's why I think Farrell was right to begin where he did. We don't start with the Constitution, or the Bill of Rights, or the fascists. We start with the preparation of our class and its vanguard for the coming struggles. That's the axis that everything we do revolves around. ...

Tactically, you have to differentiate between Shockley and the Nazis. There is a whole spectrum of outright fascists, right-wing professors, right-wing students, secretly right-wing types, open racist elements, secretly racist elements, groups that favor a stronger role for the military, etc. You have to be aware of the qualitative differences between some of these shades as well as the breadth of the spectrum. You handle each type slightly differently.

At the point where we are in the evolution of class consciousness in this country, and the state of the student movement in relation to that overall level of class consciousness, you cannot deal with Shockley or Jensen exactly as you would deal with fascists.

On these questions we have the job of winning the minds not only of the masses but of the vanguard. Even many of the more capable students cannot self-confidently explain what's wrong with these theories. You've got to take them on at that theoretical level, as well as on the level of the implicit politics of what Jensen and Shockley are doing. It will be greatly appreciated in the Black community if forces come forward to rebut this racist fakery in plain language, cogently and scientifically. On this question, one of our weapons is science.

Of course, we don't invite these people to campus, but we also know that they are going to be on campus. There are going to be debates and people are going to go to them and a lot of racists are going to look to these pseudoscientists for ammunition. The young militants will want to know how to rebut the Jensens. They really appreciate it when you give them ammunition, answer their questions, clarify their confusions so that they can answer the questions of others in their milieu.

### Counter-Mobilization

A Strategy to Fight Racist and Fascist Attacks

by Farrell  
Dobbs

A discussion on strategy and tactics in the fight against rightists and fascists, sparked by an incident at San Francisco State University in 1975.

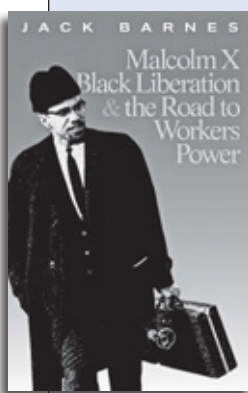


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# US troops out of Middle East, Asia!

Washington's decisions to send more troops to the war zones in the Middle East, for a new troop buildup in Afghanistan and to begin installation of the THAAD anti-ballistic missile system in South Korea and launch war games pointed toward the North have ratcheted up tensions in both parts of the world. This increases the possibility of uncontrolled events spiraling into military confrontation.

All these steps — coupled with Trump's call for a multibillion dollar expansion of the Pentagon's war machine, including upgrading its nuclear arsenal — build on war moves taken by the Obama and preceding administrations since Washington unleashed its bloody invasion of Iraq in 1991.

While still the most powerful imperialist power on earth, Washington is weaker today than in its heyday after its victory over enemy and ally alike coming out of World War II. The propertied rulers lost the Cold War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union left them without the counterrevolutionary Stalinists to strangle workers' struggles in search

of "peaceful co-existence."

They can't conclude the wars they've started in recent years, which increase in scope and destruction, leading to catastrophe for working people.

The growing war threat today is not rooted in the specific foreign policy of Trump's or any of these administrations that aim to stabilize their crisis-ridden system in the interests of the ruling propertied families. It is rooted in the unfolding, slow-burning world capitalist economic depression and developing social crisis of world imperialism.

"Working people around the world face an unstable prewar situation, not a stabilized postwar period," said the May 1991 introduction to an article by Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes, titled *Opening Guns of WWII: Washington's Assault on Iraq*, published in *New International* no. 7. "Washington's assault on Iraq was the first of the wars that will mark the segment of the historic curve of capitalist development announced by the October 1987 crash of the stock markets from New

York to Tokyo, from Bonn to Hong Kong. Capitalism today is marching not only toward more wars but at the same time stumbling toward a depression and world social crisis."

The author was right on the money.

Barnes explained the only solution to decaying capitalism's drive to war is the building of a revolutionary party and movement of millions of working people — the deplorables, as Hillary Clinton called us — to overthrow the capitalist warmakers and lead the working class to political power, as revolutionary Cuba's workers and farmers did over 50 years ago.

This is what the Socialist Workers Party is all about. It is your party. Join us in this struggle, a life worth living.

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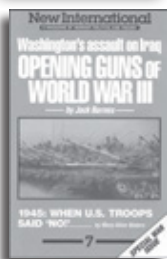


### Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun

"One of capitalism's infrequent long winters has begun. Accompanied by imperialism's accelerating drive toward war, it's going to be a long, hot winter." — Jack Barnes, in *New International* no. 12 \$16. Also in Spanish, French, Farsi, Swedish, Greek, Arabic

### US Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War

by Jack Barnes, in *New International* no. 11 \$16. Also in Spanish, French, Farsi, Swedish, Greek, Icelandic



### Washington's Assault on Iraq: Opening Guns of World War III

The 1991 "U.S.-organized carnage against the Iraqi people is among the most monstrous in the history of modern warfare." — Jack Barnes, in *New International* no. 7 \$14. Also in Spanish, French, Farsi, Swedish



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## LETTERS

### Speak out against Jew-hatred

During the Feb. 4 meeting to celebrate the life and political contributions of Fidel Castro at the Malcolm X and Dr. Betty Shabazz Cultural Center in New York, one of the participants made an anti-Semitic remark about the "top 1 percent, the Jews" that was not answered by the chairs. The Militant published a letter from a reader who was there, pointing out the danger of Jew-hatred for the working class, and a reply from the editor noting that the anti-Semitic comments were especially jarring since Castro was an outspoken opponent of Jew-hatred and in favor of the right of Israel to exist.

After the Militant published this exchange the coalition that organized the event received a letter of apology from Dayramir González, the musician who made the comments, and issued its own letter. These letters, which take a stand against Jew-hatred, are reprinted below.

To Attendees and participants in the February 4th 2017 Memorial Tribute to Fidel Castro (Fidel: The Legacy Continues):

It has come to our attention that during one of the cultural presentations the composer/pianist, Dayramir González, uttered a brief anti-Semitic reference that was offensive to all of us who stand against bigotry.

While the program was going on with more than 450 people in attendance, the evening's M.C.'s did not hear this remark, and so did not address it at the time.

As soon as this was brought to our attention, the NY-NJ Cuba Si Committee held a brief meeting to discuss the matter. We then got in touch with Sr. Gonzalez who immediately issued a formal apology, assuring us and everyone that the very brief remark was unintentional and resulted from his lack of command of the English language. We attach his letter for all to see.

As the organizing committee of this truly wonderful Tribute, we regret we were unable to address this matter on the spot, before it became a matter of greater misunderstanding. We further regret any pain it may have caused. In solidarity and peace, The NY-NJ Cuba Si Committee

To all my friends and dear friends of Cuba and all it stands for:

I am mortified to learn how my

ignorance of the language caused my unforgivable misuse of the hurtful words here. I apologize from the bottom of my heart for my failure to prepare remarks in English that would convey my true feelings and my gratitude for all the support for Cuba that you have made your cause. My nervous laugh when I realized my error was even more humiliating for me.

As I mentioned that evening, I often try to be glib in English and I am *not*. In this case, when I reached into my mind, and into the audience, for a word, I used a word that absolutely did NOT convey my meaning. I know that that room that night was full of people most important to the normalization of US/Cuba ties and to our shared future.

I am well aware of the large number of Jewish voices in the progressive community, both historically and now, that have aided Cuba's efforts to remain revolutionary and sovereign.

Please accept my humble apologies as we move forward together at this important time.

Dayramir González Vicet  
New York, New York

### 'Militant' Prisoners' Fund

The Prisoners' Fund makes it possible to send prisoners reduced rate subscriptions. To donate, send a check or money order payable to the Militant and earmarked "Prisoners' Fund" to 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

# US escalates Syria war

Continued from front page

(YPG) members and Arab fighters in preparation for the fight to take Raqqa.

A separate unit of elite U.S. Army Rangers traveling in heavily armored Stryker vehicles and Humvees flying large U.S. flags was deployed near the town of Manjib — an area that has become an unstable flashpoint for the competing military forces of Ankara, Damascus, Moscow, local forces who oppose the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad, and their allied YPG.

The U.S. rulers are seeking to more effectively defend their economic and political interests in the Middle East, as are all the competing forces there. Washington says the deployment of the Rangers unit to Manjib is to prevent any clashes between these competing and often hostile forces.

The U.S. military command in Syria reported that Russian jets mistakenly bombed Syrian Arab fighters they were training March 1. The operation "pointed to the risk of unintended clashes among the myriad forces operating on a fluid battlefield in Syria," the *New York Times* said.

In 2011 mass protests broke out across Syria demanding political rights and the overthrow of the dictatorial Assad regime. The government responded with harsh brutality, killing and imprisoning tens of thousands. A civil war ensued, which has led to a social catastrophe for working people — with more than 400,000 killed and over half the population driven from their homes.

Washington wants to assemble the forces to lay siege to Raqqa as fast as possible, before any competitor can do so. Besides the growing number of U.S. troops, the main fighting force has been the Syrian Democratic Forces, the bulk of whom, and virtually the entire command leadership, are composed of Kurds from the YPG. At the same time, Syrian government troops, backed by Moscow's bombers and Tehran-backed militia forces, are less than 40 miles away.

But Washington's plans could be delayed because of differences within the Donald Trump administration over how to proceed while limiting any breach with the Turkish government, a key NATO ally that opposes any participation by the Kurds.

YPG forces control 20,000 square miles of Syrian territory on the Syrian-Turkish border. The capitalist rulers in Ankara fear their advances will inspire the substantial Kurdish population in Turkey to fight for autonomy.

Washington, no ally of the decadeslong struggle of the over 30 million stateless Kurds for a homeland in a geographical area that spans the borders of Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran, considers the Kurdish YPG the most effective fighting force against Islamic State and therefore necessary for the fight to take Raqqa.

Last August YPG fighters expelled IS from Manjib. Ankara then sent its military forces into Syria under the flag of Free Syrian Army, aiming to force the YPG east of the Euphrates River and prevent them from linking up with the Kurdish population in northwestern Syria.

Ankara has threatened to attack Manbij if the YPG doesn't pull out. With the approval of Washington, Moscow brokered an agreement for the YPG and the Manbij Military Council that has been running the town to hand over some nearby towns to the Assad regime.

At the end of 2016, Moscow, Ankara, Tehran, Assad and rebel representatives agreed to a "cease-fire" followed by failed peace talks sponsored by the United Nations that ended March 3.

But for Syria's toilers there is little cease-fire.

In the last week of February, 282 civilians were killed, including 54 children, as a result of intensified airstrikes and shelling by the regime and Russian warplanes. And on March 9 the BBC reported U.S.-led coalition airstrikes killed 20 men, women and children near Raqqa.

### Correction

In the article "Cuba and Angola: the war for freedom in southern Africa," in the March 20 issue, the name of one of the co-authors was inadvertently omitted. The authors were Róger Calero and Rebecca Williamson.